

City of St. Charles

2004 *PRIORITIES* Survey Results



October 29, 2004

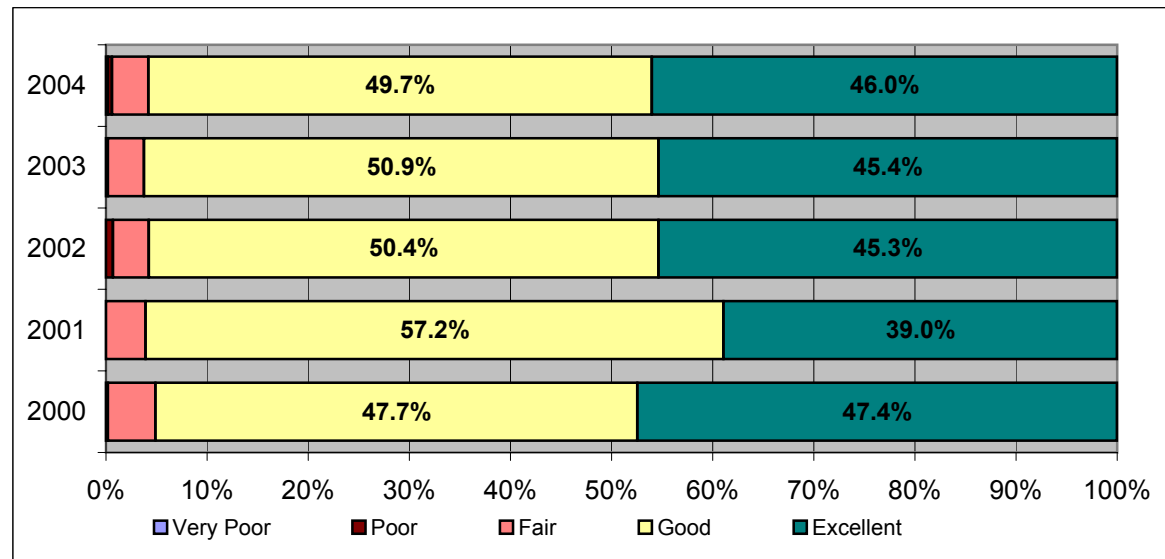
On September 10, 2004, 1532 Priorities surveys were sent out to a random sample of residents within the City of St. Charles. Of the 1532 surveys that were sent out, 479 were returned to the City before the cut-off date of September 26, 2004. This resulted in a 31.3% response rate. This response rate was high enough to make this sample statistically representative of the entire population of St. Charles with a margin of error of plus/minus 4.5%.

The list of potential respondents was randomly selected from the Utility Billing list of residents. A complete listing of survey responses and comments can be found later in the report. The summary provides a brief overview of the information gained from this year's survey and how it compares to previous years' results.

I. Results Summary

St. Charles as a place to live:

How would you describe St. Charles as a place to live?

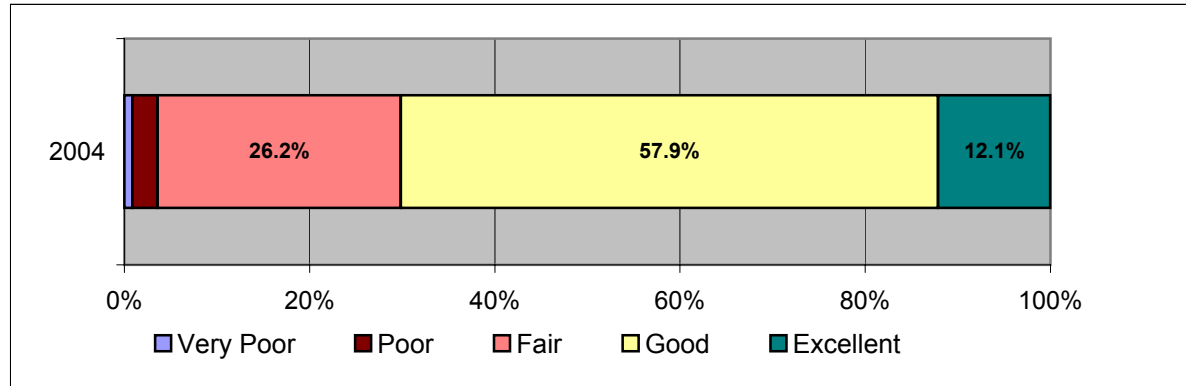


95.7% of respondents described St. Charles as an "excellent" or "good" place to live.

Many times demographics can influence how a person answers a question but neither age, neighborhood, length of residency, income level nor education level influenced this statistic. All types of residents enjoy the quality of life in St. Charles.

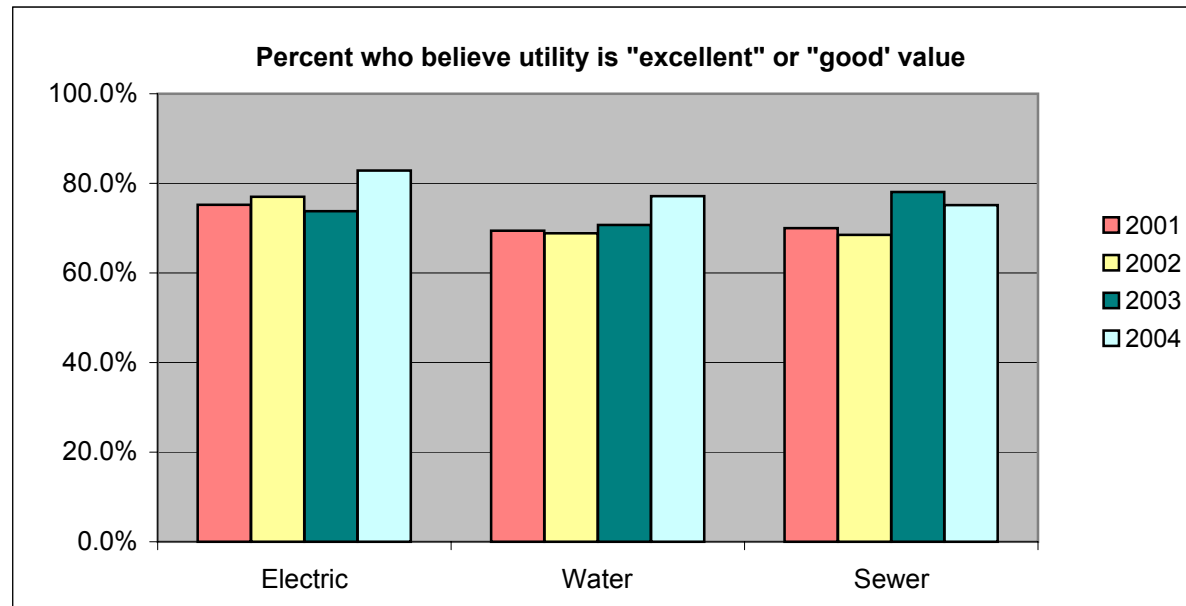
Value of City Services:

Overall, how would you rate the value you receive for your city tax dollar?



70% of respondents feel they are getting a good or excellent value.

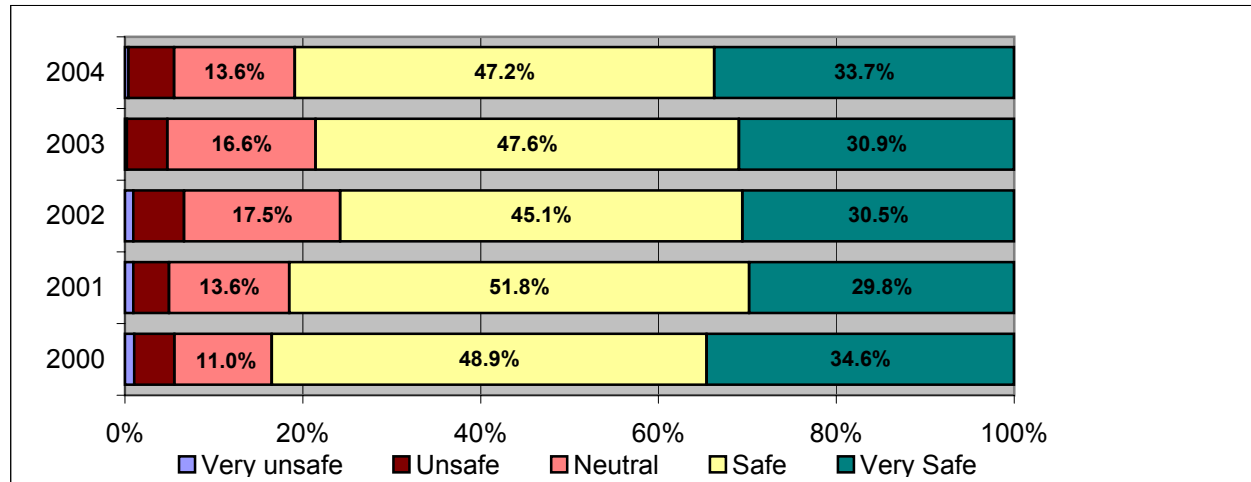
Do you feel that the utility services are a good value for their money?



Improvements in the ratings for the electric and water utilities were statistically significant.

Perception of public safety

How safe do you feel walking the streets of your neighborhood after dark?

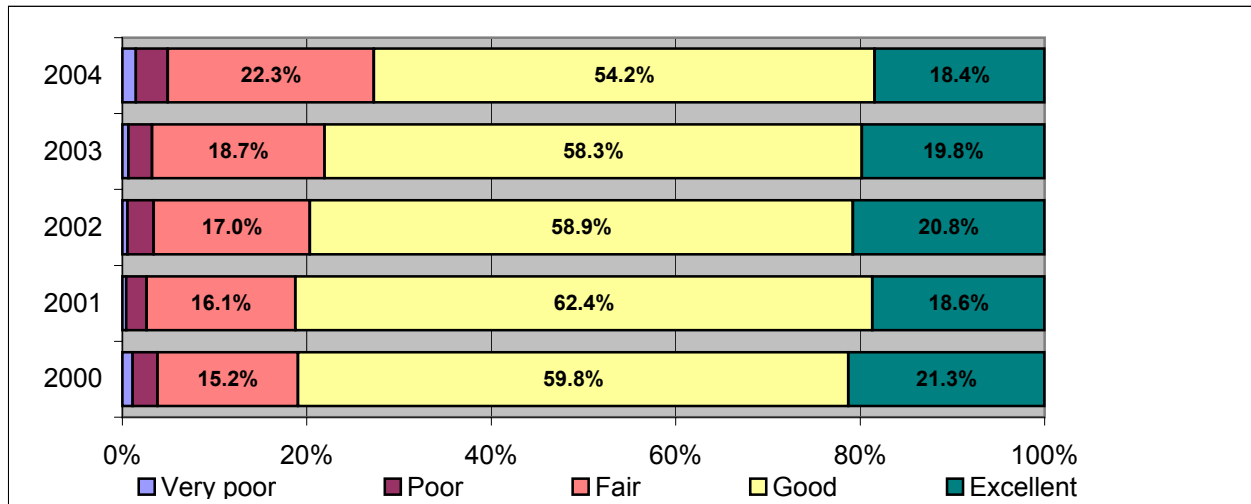


81% of respondents feel safe or very safe.

Women and those with lower incomes were more likely to feel less safe.

Citizen involvement

How would you rate the City's efforts to involve citizens in the decision-making process?



73 % of respondents feel that city efforts to involve citizens in the decision-making process are excellent or good.

The Priority of the City's Goals and Responsibilities

Residents were asked to pick the top three goals of the City out of eight choices. The responses were weighted according to how they were rated. They were given 3 points for being picked as the most important goal, 2 points for being picked as the second and so on. Listed below are the top three choices of the citizens from 2000 to 2004.

2004 Most Important Goals

- 1. Ensure Public Safety**
- 2. Provide Quality and Responsive City Services**
- 3. Improve Traffic Circulation**

2003 Most Important Goals

1. Provide Quality and Responsive City Services
2. Ensure Public Safety
3. Improve Traffic Circulation

2001 Most Important Goals

1. Provide Quality and Responsive City Services
2. Ensure Public Safety
3. Improve traffic circulation

2002 Most Important Goals

1. Provide Quality and Responsive City Services
2. Ensure Public Safety
3. Improve Traffic Circulation

2000 Most Important Goals

1. Ensure Public Safety
2. Provide Quality and Responsive City Services
3. Improve traffic circulation

Importance and Satisfaction Ratings:

In this section citizens were asked to rate the importance of, and their satisfaction with 36 different city services on scales of 1 to 5, with 1 being *very important* or *satisfied* and 5 being *very unimportant* or *dissatisfied*. Averages were used to compare the services on the basis of their relative importance and satisfaction according to the responses. The lower the average of a service, the higher its importance or satisfaction was. When the services were ranked, it was found that residents rated similar categories each year the survey has been conducted as highest in importance.

2004 Top Five Most Important

1. Responding to fires	1.05
2. Providing emergency medical services	1.06
3. Responding to citizen calls	1.15
4. Keeping the streets free of snow and ice	1.30
5. Investigating and solving crimes	1.33

2004 Top Five Most Satisfied

1. Responding to fires	1.38
2. Providing emergency medical services	1.41
3. Responding to citizen calls	1.61
4. Keeping the streets free of snow and ice	1.74
5. Preventing fires through school & adult education	1.77

2003 Top Five Most Important

1. Responding to fires	1.10
2. Providing emergency medical services	1.15
3. Responding to citizen calls	1.20
4. Investigating and solving crimes	1.38
5. Enforcing the laws regarding the use and sale of narcotics	1.44

2003 Top Five Most Satisfied

1. Responding to fires	1.42
2. Providing emergency medical services	1.46
3. Responding to citizen calls	1.64
4. Providing accurate and consistent utility billing services	1.79
5. Preventing fires through safety inspections	1.89

2002 Top Five Most Important

1. Responding to fires	1.10
2. Providing emergency medical services	1.14
3. Responding to citizen calls	1.21
4. Investigating and solving crimes	1.32
5. Keeping the streets free of snow and ice	1.40

2002 Top Five Most Satisfied

1. Responding to fires	1.33
2. Providing emergency medical services	1.36
3. Responding to citizen calls	1.61
4. Preventing fires through safety inspections	1.70
5. Keeping the streets free of snow and ice	1.78

The following are the city services that the citizens rated as the least important and least satisfied. It is important that this is not mistaken for the services '*not being important*' to the community. The services were merely ranked lower than other services offered by the City. The below information can be used for comparative analysis to reveal areas that may need more attention or reveal reoccurring trends over the past eight years.

2004 Top Five Least Important

1. Financially supporting the performing arts	2.70
2. Promoting Affordable housing	2.45
3. Promoting housing for senior citizens	2.20
4. Making improvements for pedestrians and bicyclists	2.09
5. Providing easy to read budgetary and financial data	2.08

2004 Top Five Least Satisfied

1. Improving traffic circulation across the Fox	3.29
2. Promoting affordable housing	3.15
3. Appropriate development on Randall and E.	2.93
4. Promoting housing for senior citizens.	2.89
5. Revitalizing Downtown St. Charles	2.86

2003 Top Five Least Important

1. Financially supporting the performing arts	2.86
2. Improving existing public transportation system	2.61
3. Promote affordable housing	2.60
4. Promoting housing for senior citizens	2.42
5. Providing budgetary and financial data to citizens in an easy to read format	2.31

2003 Top Five Least Satisfied

1. Promoting affordable housing	3.29
2. Improvign traffic circulation	3.24
3. Getting appropriate development on Randall & E. Main	3.10
4. Improving existing public transportation system	3.06
5. Promoting housing for senior citizens	3.00

2002 Top Five Least Important

1. Financially supporting the performing arts	2.81
2. Improving existing public transportation system	2.62
3. Promote affordable housing	2.50
4. Getting appropriate development on Randall & E. Main St.	2.32
5. Promoting housing for senior citizens	2.31

2002 Top Five Least Satisfied

1. Improving traffic circulation	3.42
2. Promoting affordable housing	3.37
3. Improving existing public transportation system	3.28
4. Getting appropriate development on Randall & E. Main St.	2.97
5. Promoting housing for senior citizens	2.92

Ideally, the areas which the citizens rated the highest in terms of importance would also be the highest in terms of citizen satisfaction. While this is true for many of the services provided by the city, there are some areas where there are discrepancies between the importance ratings and the satisfaction ratings given by the citizens. Listed below are the service areas where there is the greatest difference between average importance ratings and average satisfaction ratings:

2004 Top Five Greatest Discrepancies

1. Improving traffic circulation for trips crossing the Fox River	-1.76
2. Preserving green and open space	-1.10
3. Managing development to maintain community values	-1.04
4. Improving traffic circulation for trips that DO NOT cross the Fox R.	-0.94
5. Providing aesthetically pleasing drinking water (hardness)	-0.93

2003 Top Five Greatest Discrepancies

1. Improving traffic circulation	-1.49
2. Investigating and solving crimes	-0.91
3. Managing development to maintain community values	-0.90
4. Preserving green space and open space	-0.89
4. Preventing vandalism to property within the city	-0.89

2002 Top Five Greatest Discrepancies

1. Improving traffic circulation	-1.82
2. Preserving green space and open space	-1.22
3. Managing development to maintain community values	-1.11
4. Promoting affordable housing	-0.87
5. Preventing vandalism to property within the city	-0.80

2001 Greatest Discrepancies

1. Improving traffic circulation	-1.48
2. Preserving green space and open space	-1.22
3. Managing development to maintain community values	-1.15
4. Enforcing laws regarding the use and sale of narcotics	-1.03
5. Preventing vandalism to property within the city	-0.95

2000 Greatest Discrepancies

1. Improving traffic circulation	-1.68
2. Preserving green space and open space	-1.36
3. Managing development to maintain community values	-1.11
4. Investigating and solving crimes	-0.92
5. Preventing vandalism to property within the city	-0.88

II. Observations:

Overall, the Priorities Survey shows citizens satisfied with the services provided by the City of St. Charles and is largely consistent with last year's results. Several specific observations based on the results include:

High Quality of Life

Over 95.7% of respondents described St. Charles as an "excellent" or "good" place to live, consistent with previous years results. Importantly, answers did not differ significantly based on the age of the respondent, neighborhood they lived in, their length of residency, income level or education level. This indicates that residents of all backgrounds enjoy the quality of life in St. Charles. Perception of public safety remains high, improving from 78.5% of respondents feeling "safe" or "very safe" to 81%. However, women and those with lower incomes were more likely to feel less safe. In addition to perception, residents are satisfied with their public safety services. Out of 36 different services, the top three in satisfaction included Fire, EMS and Police.

Good Value for Citizen's Tax Dollar

70% of respondents felt that they were receiving a "good" or "excellent" value for their City tax dollar. Citizens felt that the utilities were an increasingly good value for their money as the percent of respondents rating this value "excellent" increased from 2003 for electric (25.2 to 33.8%), water (22.5 to 27.8%) and sewer (21.0 to 25.9%).

Traffic Continues to be a Concern

Improving traffic circulation remains an important concern. In fact, the largest discrepancy between satisfaction and importance ratings for a city service was for improving traffic circulation for trips crossing the river. Out of a five point scale with 1 being the best, citizens rated this service a 1.53 in importance (indicating high importance) and a 3.29 in satisfaction (indicating low satisfaction) resulting in a -1.76 discrepancy. Improving traffic also remained the third most important goal for citizens. While a number of comments further demonstrated citizen concern, this is one area where the City's ability to influence the problem is limited.

Impact of the First Street Redevelopment Project

The survey was administered during the peak of newspaper coverage over the First Street Redevelopment project and before the City had released a pamphlet in the City newsletter explaining the initiative. Consequently, the results for several questions were influenced by this issue. Approximately 9% of respondents wrote a critical comment about the project. However, given the scope of this project and the potential use of eminent domain, such concern should be expected. It is also important to note that compared to other cities that have undertaken similar projects, opposition is limited.

Overall, critics of the project were less satisfied with the City's efforts to involve citizens, felt downtown revitalization was less important (although they were also less satisfied) and were less satisfied with the City's efforts to preserve the historical features of the town and to manage development to maintain community values. Respondents who offered critical comments of the project were demographically no different than the average respondent.

Consistent Satisfaction with Services

Overall, satisfaction levels remained consistent with City services. The following services showed statistically significant improvements in satisfaction ratings from the prior year:

- * Preventing fires through school and adult education
- * Attracting appropriate development on Randall Rd. and East Main
- * Keeping the streets clean of dirt and trash (highest rating since 1997)
- * Keeping the streets free of snow and ice (highest rating since inception of survey in 1996)
- * Teaching drug and gang resistance to students
- * Investigating and solving crimes
- * Enforcing laws regarding the use and sale of narcotics (highest rating since question first asked in 2000)
- * Enforcing laws regarding juvenile delinquency (highest rating since question first asked in 2000)
- * Preventing vandalism to property within the City
- * Enforcing alcohol related laws regarding possession and DUI

Revitalizing Downtown St. Charles was the only service to show a statistically significant worsening in satisfaction levels. Satisfaction in this area has been dropping since 2000.